

EHS students learn about the ultimate tragedy

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Car victim removed from wreckage and put on stretcher Photo by JESSICA BROUSSEAU/The Mid-North Monitor/QMI Agency

An accident: sirens, screams, tears and death.

The scene was laid out behind Espanola High School (EHS) Monday afternoon as a mock scenario on the affects of drinking/distracted driving.

The scene played out post-accident. Beer cans scattered around a silver four-door, and shattered glass surrounds the two cars after they hit head on.

A young man stumbles out as the echo of an aluminum can falls from the car.

A body lays lifeless 10 feet from a car, blood pooling around her head and two females are seen on the dashboard of the red car, and one young female passenger is able to walk away with cuts.

Sirens pierce the quiet air. First, two police cars, then a fire rescue unit and two ambulances.

And yet, there is one sound that drowns out the three.

The devastating heart-breaking cries of a mother and father as they rush over only to find their daughter lying motionless on the pavement.

At that moment the rescue workers are cutting the rooftop off of the red car to get the other girls, and the officer has handcuffed the young male driver, who now sits in the back of the patrol car.

While the young man may be seated in the back of the police car, he is not out of sight of the grieving parents.

While the sounds of the Jaws of Life are still cutting away, officers have to restrain the heart broken mother and the father from getting near the patrol car.

The Jaws of Life are no longer needed as the roof is removed from the red car and paramedics are carefully removing the two injured girls from the car. A neck brace is secured around each of their necks and then placed on stretchers to be taken to the hospital.

The mother's cry breaks through the air again as a hearse pulls up beside their daughter, and as she tries to stop them from taking her little girl, she is gently removed from the deceased body by her husband, consoling one another as they watch their child disappear into a black body bag.

This mock scene was put on by EHS, the Espanola Fire Department, the Espanola Police Services and the Manitoulin and Sudbury District EMS.

While it is not the first to be done in front of the school, Dean Riggs, co-op teacher, said it was the first time it was done with such detail, and the school does as much as it can to bring awareness to deadly drinking/distracted driving.

"If we can do this that would prevent someone from doing such a thing or make them aware and to stop it I think is awesome," he said. "We should be doing this every year, and I hope we continue to."

Riggs said while the message might not have gotten through to all the students who were in the crowd, there will be some that it reached who will pass along to their friends.

“Each one of those students can affect 10 other students.”

Emily O’Connell and classmates/fellow scenario actors Kaylee Arbour and Sarah Schwartz agree that drinking/distracted driving is becoming a big issue these days.

“Obviously, with prom and graduation it is a really big issue with everyone, not just us,” said O’Connell. “I think this is the most effective way to get people to open their eyes.”

Participating and experiencing first hand what can occur when distracted was eye-opening for the trio.

“It was a lot more real to see what would happen and see the Jaws of Life,” said Schwartz.

“And the fact that they are cutting the roof of the car over top of my head,” added Arbour. “That was scary.”

After this experiment the three girls said they won’t be drinking and driving, neither would they be getting into a vehicle with those who are.

“I think at one point we have all been faced with it and it’s hard when you’re peer pressured too,” said the girls about getting into a vehicle with an impaired/distracted driver.

The grieving parents, played by Dario and Theresa Laurenti, wanted the message that the choices that can be made can cause dramatic effects not only for the victim who died, but for the family, friends and all in their life.

“Sometimes we think it’s just us in our lives making these decisions, but it affects many, many people around them,” she said. “We wanted the intensity of the performance to give the students a moment to say ‘this would be devastating, this would be life changing for so many people.’”

Dario said the thought that “it is never going to happen to me” can change in a split second and multiple lives are affected.

“It’s the ultimate tragedy.”